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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2006

In Today's Papers

Turkish Economic & Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) Survey
All papers gave extensive coverage to a poll carried out by TESEV in which 1,492 people in 23 cities were surveyed on a wide range of social issues. Papers highlight that while the rate of those who define themselves as Muslim rose to 44.6 percent, the rate of women wearing headscarves fell to 11.4 percent and the rate of those who want Sharia (Islamic law) declined to 9 percent, down from 21 percent in 1999 and 16 percent in 2002. Seventy-three percent saw no threat to secularism and 61.3 percent rejected allegations that fundamentalism is on the rise. At the same time, 20.3 percent of those surveyed define themselves as secular, and 48.5 define themselves as "Islamist." The percentage of people who prefer a President whose wife does not wear a headscarf is 50.8 percent. According to the survey, people see unemployment and inflation as the most important problems in Turkey.

EU Negotiations and the Cyprus Issue

Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Safak and others: Yesterday, PM Erdogan, FM Gul and State Minister Babacan held a meeting to discuss the Cyprus issue. FM Gul said that making concessions regarding Cyprus it is out of question to problem on the road to EU. Gul said that issues like Cyprus cannot be solved using "deadlines or blackmails." Gul stressed that Turkey has fulfilled its responsibilities concerning the Cyprus issue and now it is the EU's turn to keep its promises and begin direct trade with Turkish Cypriots. Gul will go to Finland for the EuroMed Foreign Ministers meeting which will be held on November 27-28.

Columnist Murat Yetkin wrote in Radikal that, although the official rhetoric says differently, Turkey is moving forward on finding a settlement to the Cyprus question before the deadline. Yetkin says there has been a series of talks between the EU presidency and Turkish government which were not made public. The basis of the Turkish government approach is to open ports for Greek Cypriots simultaneous with an EU action to end the trade isolation against

Turkish Cypriots. Along with Finland, France is also working on this formula which would keep Varosha/Maras off the table to allow the UN to make a deal as part of a lasting settlement for the long run.

Nationalist MHP and Opposition leader CHP Moving Closer?

Milliyet reports on the improving relations between the nationalist MHP and leading opposition party CHP. Responding to CHP leader Baykal's comments praising the MHP yesterday, a warm message to CHP and its leader Baykal came from MHP, saying that "the past tensions are over. Now MHP and CHP share many common values and it is possible that Turkey will have a CHP-MHP coalition government in the future."

Metin Ozkan, a columnist in Tercuman believes that the MHP-CHP rapprochement became clear during the recent MHP convention, noting that leader MHP Bahceli did not make any negative references to CHP in his overlong party address. Ozkan thinks that closeness between the right and left wing might harm the MHP since it may confuse the voters. There is also a possibility according to Ozkan, that the MHP-CHP coalition may be able to reach a broader consensus on some controversial issues, including the presidential election and the headscarf debate.

University Rectors Criticized Education Convention Decisions

Cumhuriyet reports that the Rectors' Committee issued a declaration in which it criticized the recommendatory decision aiming to eliminate the differences between the graduates of ordinary and vocational high schools when entering the universities. Higher Board of Education (YOK) chairman Tezic said that they heard that during the Convention, the National Education Council would discuss paving the way for graduates of the Imam Hatip high schools to university education in fields other than theology, and therefore

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they did not participate in the council meeting.

TV Highlights

NTV (7 A.M.)

Domestic News

- The trial of 56 Mayors who had sent a letter to Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen to give support to ROJ TV continued yesterday in Diyarbakir
- National Education Council decisions trigger tensions in the Parliament. CHP deputies walk out during debates on the proposal in Parliament's Budget Commission.

International News

- Greek Cypriot Administration has approved a bill envisaging seven year prison sentences for people who acquire, sell or use property belonging to Greek Cypriots in Northern Cyprus
- Lebanese Christian cabinet minister Pierre Gemayel, an outspoken critic of Syria and Hezbollah, was assassinated near Beirut on Tuesday.
- UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said the United States was trapped in Iraq
- Iraq restores diplomatic relations with neighboring Syria

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